



Security Council

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Letter dated 13 February 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Costa Rica in November 2008 (see annex).

The document was prepared under my own responsibility, following consultations with other members of the Security Council. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jorge Urbina
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 13 February 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Costa Rica (November 2008)

Introduction

Under the presidency of Costa Rica, the Security Council dealt with a wide range of regional issues, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Kosovo, the Middle East, Nepal, Lebanon, Somalia and the Sudan. The Council elected, simultaneously with the General Assembly, five judges to the International Court of Justice; received the coordinated report of its three counter-terrorism subsidiary bodies and held an open debate on maintenance of international peace and security; strengthening collective security through general regulation and reduction of armaments.

The President of the Security Council introduced the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly and made a statement on behalf of the members of the Council. Also on behalf of the members of the Council, he made a statement at the solemn meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

During the month, the Security Council held 16 formal meetings and, owing to the sensitive nature of some reporting issues, it programmed and held nine consultations of the whole and one private meeting with troop-contributing countries for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

During the month the Council adopted three resolutions (MONUC, Somalia and EUFOR/Bosnia and Herzegovina) and three presidential statements (Côte d'Ivoire, Strengthening collective security through general regulation and reduction of armaments, and Kosovo) and the President of the Security Council read four statements to the press (two on Guinea-Bissau, one on Somalia and one on the terrorist attacks on Mumbai, India).

Africa

Côte d'Ivoire

On 7 November, the Council adopted a presidential statement on Côte d'Ivoire (S/PRST/2008/42), by which it expressed its deep concern about the possible delay of the elections in Côte d'Ivoire for the third time since the signing of the Ouagadougou peace agreement, and urged the parties in the West African country to find an agreement on a new and credible electoral time frame, with the understanding that the presidential elections would be organized before the end of spring 2009, and to take immediate and concrete steps to complete the identification and registration of voters operations.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 11 November, in consultations of the whole, owing to the fragile situation in the country, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Among other things, such as detailing the needs on the ground, he requested the Council to authorize additional forces to enable the Mission to fulfil its mandate.

On 20 November, the Council held a public meeting on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, having before it a letter dated 31 October 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/703).

The Council unanimously adopted resolution 1843 (2008), by which it authorized a temporary increase of the military strength of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of up to 2,785 military personnel, and the strength of its formed police unit of up to 300 personnel. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and as recommended by the Secretary-General in his letter of 12 November (S/2008/703), the Council authorized the immediate deployment of those additional capacities until 31 December 2008. It expressed its intention to extend that authorization on the occasion of the renewal of the MONUC mandate, underlining that the duration of stay of the additional forces would depend on the security situation in the Kivus.

On 25 November, the Permanent Missions of Belgium and France chaired an Arria-formula meeting on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Karel de Gucht.

On 26 November, the Council held a private meeting with the troop-contributing countries to MONUC, at which, according to the communiqué that was issued that day, the Council and the troop-contributing countries heard a briefing by Alan Doss, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Also according to the communiqué, the members of the Council, Mr. Doss and representatives of participating troop-contributing countries had an exchange of views.

On 26 November, at a public meeting, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUC, Alan Doss. He mentioned that the recent fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had displaced another 250,000 people, some of them for the second or third time, in the eastern portion of the country. He welcomed the recent intense regional and bilateral efforts to resolve the crisis. He recalled that a ceasefire had been established, and several armed groups had pulled back to create a zone of separation between the various forces in the southern part of North Kivu. He informed the Council that the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Olesegun Obasanjo, would return to the region at the end of the week to address the continuing presence of the armed Rwandan groups there and follow up on the Nairobi communiqué.

At the briefing, statements were made by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Atoki Ileka, and, among the Council members, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium urged the Council to be fully engaged in the crisis.

On 26 November, after the public meeting, owing to the fragile situation on the ground, the Council held consultations of the whole, in order to have an interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Guinea-Bissau

On 20 November, the President of the Security Council read out a statement to the press, on behalf of the Council members, by which they welcomed the holding on 16 November 2008 of the legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau, as scheduled, in an orderly and peaceful manner.

On 25 November, the President of the Security Council, on behalf of the members of the Council, read out a statement to the press, condemning in the strongest terms the violent attack on the residence of the President of Guinea-Bissau, João Bernardo Vieira, on 23 November by military elements. The members of the Security Council regretted that such a serious incident had occurred after the peaceful and orderly elections of 16 November.

Somalia

On 20 November, the Council held a public meeting on the situation in Somalia, at which it unanimously adopted resolution 1844 (2008), intended to strengthen the arms embargo on the violence-plagued nation of Somalia by specifying sanctions on violators and expanding the mandate of the Committee that oversees the ban. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council decided that travel restrictions and an asset freeze would be applied to individuals and entities that engaged in activities that threatened the peace or the political process and obstructed the delivery of humanitarian assistance, in addition to those that breached the weapons ban, which was put in place by resolution 733 (1992) and amended by subsequent resolutions.

After the meeting, the President of the Security Council read out a statement to the press on Somalia, by which members of the Council encouraged all parties in Somalia to implement fully the Djibouti Agreement, and stressed the need for all those that are not yet parties to this agreement to become part of it as a matter of urgency. While stressing that progress on an inclusive political process was key to improving the security and humanitarian situation, they expressed their concern about the worsening security and humanitarian situation and the fragility of the political process, and reiterated their commitment to consider feasible next steps. Finally, members of the Council expressed their concern about the number of incidents of piracy off the Somali coast.

Also on 20 November, the Council held a debate to hear briefings by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Haile Menkeirios, the Director of the Africa II Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Raisedon Zenenga, and the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, Efthimios Mitropoulos, and to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2008/709), including on the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia.

The Council then held consultations of the whole to exchange views with the briefers.

Sudan

On 5 November, the Council was briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Edmond Mulet, on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2008/662), and heard an update on the activities of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan until 4 October.

At the public meeting, the Assistant Secretary-General briefed the Council on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Southern Sudan, and how it had contributed to the normalization of the area and the return of displaced persons, but said that the parties, with the assistance of the international community, had much work to do to ensure lasting stability.

The briefing was followed by consultations of the whole, where Council members had an interactive dialogue with the Assistant Secretary-General.

Asia

Security Council mission to Afghanistan

From 22 to 28 November the members of the Council undertook a mission to Afghanistan.

Iraq

On 14 November, the Council held a debate, at which it was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, who told the Council members that, following a significant reduction in violence in 2008, Iraqis must continue to seize the momentum to build long-term stability and that the Government of Iraq should be commended for the progress achieved. He said that Iraq would now be called upon to deliver services, security guarantees, conditions for free and fair elections, credible and independent institutions, and to resolve tensions among its various communities.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General introduced the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/688), and said that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq had focused in recent months on supporting electoral preparations, laying the seeds for a resolution to the problem of disputed internal boundaries, supporting national development strategies and facilitating Iraq's partnership with the international community and its neighbours.

The Council also heard statements by the representative of the United States, on behalf of the multinational force, and the representative of Iraq.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 25 November, the Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. He expressed regret that Israel and the Palestinians were likely to fall short of their commitment, made at Annapolis, to reach an agreement by the end of the year. At the same time, he welcomed the parties' affirmation that they had engaged in direct, sustained and intensive negotiations.

After the briefing, owing to the sensitivity of the issue, the Council held consultations of the whole, where members of the Council held an interactive dialogue with the Under-Secretary-General.

Lebanon

On 26 November, the Council was briefed by the Special Coordinator of the Secretary-General, Michael Williams, at consultations of the whole on Lebanon, at which it discussed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

Nepal

On 7 November, the Council held a debate, followed by consultations, to discuss the report of the Secretary-General on the request of Nepal for United Nations assistance in support of its peace progress (S/2008/670), in which the parties in Nepal are commended for their commitment to consolidating democracy, but it is also stated that "understandable" delays in forming the Government have not led to the "hoped-for progress" that would allow the United Nations special political mission in the country, known as the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), to wind down by the end of its mandate, in January 2009, as previously called for by the Council.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative in Nepal, Ian Martin, briefed the Council on what he called "remarkable" progress made by the people of Nepal towards peace and democracy, the extended assistance of UNMIN and the sustained support needed from the international community. He also said that the Mission might need an extension beyond 23 January 2009.

Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 20 November, the Council held a public meeting on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and adopted resolution 1845 (2008), by which it authorized for a further year, until 21 November 2009, the European Union stabilization force (EUFOR) mandated to ensure continued compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended fighting in that country in 1995.

Kosovo

On 26 November, the Council held a debate regarding the implementation of its resolution 1244 (1999) and considered the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/692), which covers the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and developments related thereto, from 26 June to 31 October 2008.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMIK, Lamberto Zannier, briefed the Council on the overall situation in Kosovo. He said the situation remained calm and stable, but the political transition following Kosovo's declaration of independence on 17 February was proving to be more complex than many observers had expected.

The Council heard statements by the Foreign Minister of Serbia, Vuk Jeremić, and Skender Hyseni, on behalf of Kosovo.

The Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/44), in which it welcomed the report and stated that, taking into account the positions of Belgrade and Pristina on the report which were reflected in their respective statements, it welcomed their intentions to cooperate with the international community.

International peace and security

Open debate on strengthening collective security and regulation of armaments

On 19 November, the Council held an open debate on the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security: strengthening collective security through general regulation and reduction of armaments", having before it a letter dated 10 November 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2008/697).

The meeting was presided by the President of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Óscar Arias Sánchez. He explained that his delegation had convened the debate in order to examine Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which gave the Council the duty to promote peace and security with the least diversion of resources for armaments, by formulating plans for a system for the regulation of armaments. He underlined that the time had come to recognize the link between the waste of resources devoted to arms and the need for resources for development.

The Council was addressed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Sergio Duarte, who read a statement by the Secretary-General, in which the Secretary-General said that the strengthening of collective security could build trust between States and could pave the way for agreements and cooperation in other fields, steadily trying countries together in a web of shared interest, better understanding and mutual support.

Among the other 14 members of the Council who made statements, the Vice-President and Foreign Minister of Panama, Samuel Lewis Navarro, said one of the main international security concerns was the continued illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which fuelled conflicts and worsened social problems.

Other delegations underlined, among other things, the complex and not always linear relationship between disarmament and development.

The speakers welcomed the adoption by the First Committee of the General Assembly of a draft resolution entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms".

The Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/43), in which it stated that the regulation and reduction of armaments and armed forces constituted one of the most important measures to promote international peace and security with the least diversion of the world's human and economic resources. Recognizing that development, peace and security and human rights were interlinked and mutually reinforcing, the Council stressed the importance of an effective multilateral system to better address the challenges and threats confronting the world, and reiterated that

cooperation with regional and subregional organizations in matters relating to the maintenance of peace and security and consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter could improve collective security.

Coordinated reports by Chairmen of counter-terrorism committees

On 12 November, the Council held a debate to hear briefings by the Chairmen of its three subsidiary bodies on counter-terrorism, namely, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), then chaired by Ambassador Jan Grauls of Belgium; the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), chaired by Ambassador Neven Jurica of Croatia; and the Committee established by resolution 1540 (2004), chaired by Ambassador Jorge Urbina of Costa Rica. The Committees presented their 180-day reports, in accordance with resolutions 1805 (2008), 1810 (2008) and 1822 (2008), which covered the work of the Committees during the past six months.

Other matters

International Court of Justice

On 6 November, the Council and the General Assembly, at simultaneous and separate meetings, re-elected two judges whose terms were due to expire and chose three new judges to serve on the International Court of Justice. The five elected judges came from Brazil (Antônio Augusto Cançado Trindade), France (Ronny Abraham), Jordan (Awn Shawkat Al-Khasawneh), Somalia (Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf) and the United Kingdom (Christopher Greenwood).

Annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly

On 18 November, as previously agreed by the other members of the Council, the President of the Council presented the annual report of the Security Council (A/63/2) to the General Assembly, covering the period from 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2008.

On behalf of all members of the Council, the President of the Security Council stated that the annual report demonstrated the diverse array of issues that the Council discussed during the reporting period, when the Council held 219 formal meetings, of which 191 were public, in addition to 18 meetings with troop-contributing countries, and held 177 consultations of the whole.

The President of the Security Council also highlighted the fact that, during the reporting period, the Council adopted 58 resolutions and 50 presidential statements.

Statement at the solemn meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

On 24 November, the President of the Security Council made a statement, on behalf of the Council members, at the solemn meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In his remarks, the President of the Security Council said that the international community was witnessing a series of constructive efforts and initiatives undertaken by relevant actors in the region and beyond, which the Council strongly hoped would advance the process towards achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. While

some progress had been made in the year since the Annapolis Conference with the resumption of direct, bilateral negotiations, the situation on the ground remained a serious concern. Among other things, the President of the Council underlined that, to make progress, the parties must avoid actions that undermined confidence and could prejudice the outcomes of negotiations.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 27 November, the President of the Council, on behalf of the Council members, circulated a statement to the press, condemning the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, that started on 26 November, which included the taking of hostages and caused numerous deaths and injuries.

The members of the Council expressed their condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of India.